Alberta

Demographic Spotlight

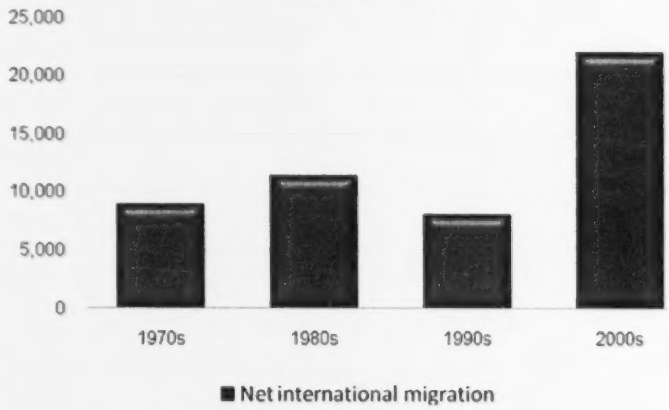
December 2009

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN ALBERTA

SUMMARY

The number of net international migrants in Alberta has more than doubled from an average of approximately 9,500 in 1970s-1990s to an average of 22,000 since 2000[1], (see Figure 1).[2] Much of the 12,500 increase in average net international migration has occurred since 2005. More than 60% of immigrants to Alberta are economic immigrants (i.e., skilled workers). According to the 2006 Census, 59% of immigrants came from Asia (China and Philippines), with the majority of immigrants (80%) choosing to settle down in urban centers such as Calgary and Edmonton.

Figure 1: Net International Migration 10 Year Averages in Alberta

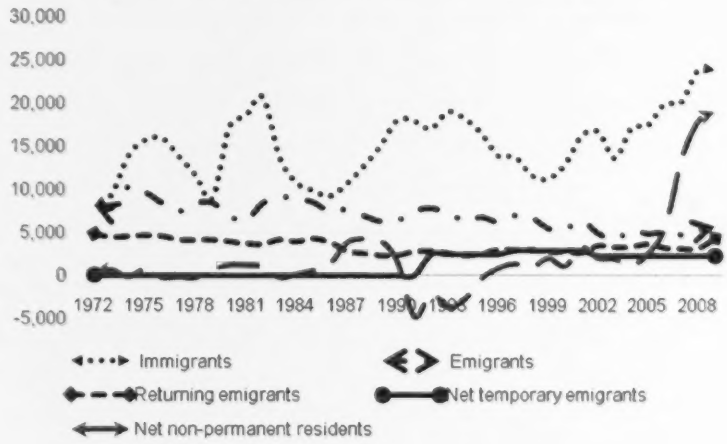


CONTEXT

International migration is the movement of people between Canada and other countries. Net International migration is equal to immigrants[3], minus emigrants[4], minus net temporary emigrants[5], plus returned emigrants[6], plus net non-permanent residents[7]. Figure 2 denotes the historical trends for each component of net international migration. Overall, immigration flows have been quite volatile, whereas returned emigrants and net temporary emigrants have been relatively constant. Emigrants have slowly been on the decline. Net non-permanent residents, however, presented significant increases in 2007 and 2008.

Exceptionally strong economic growth and labour shortages in Alberta accelerated net in-flows of international migrants (i.e., more immigrants, less emigrants, etc). Alberta received a historical high of 19,283 net international migrants in 2007. Between 2000 and 2007, Alberta received on average 7% of the total immigrants coming into Canada, following Ontario (53%) and British Columbia (16%).

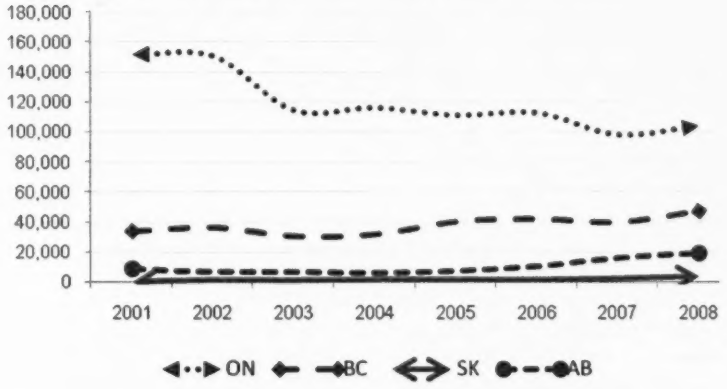
Figure 2: Components of Net International Migration



[1] Refers to Census years, i.e., July to June
[2] All data are from Statistics Canada unless specified
[3] A person who is not a Canadian citizen by birth, but has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by Canadian immigration authorities
[4] A person who has left Canada to another country
[5] Net sum of people who have left Canada to live temporarily in another country; those who return after temporarily being outside of Canada
[6] Person who returns to Canada after having been classified as an emigrant
[7] Persons who are lawfully in Canada on a temporary basis under the authority of a temporary resident permit, along with members of their family living with them

When compared to other provinces (see Figure 3), British Columbia historically has had a similar pattern of net international migration as Alberta. Saskatchewan has experienced a steady net flow of international migration with approximately 1,700 migrants on average. Ontario, on the other hand, has seen a gradual decline in net international migrants in recent years.

Figure 3: Net International Migration after 2000



WHO ARE THEY?

International migrants are composed of four broad categories: skilled workers, refugees, extended families, and other special consideration groups. Skilled workers (i.e., permanent residents), which are the predominant category of immigrants shown in Table 1, represent 62% of immigrants coming to Alberta. Over the past 10 years, Alberta's share of economic immigrants has been 4 percentage points higher than the national level. Family-class immigrants in Alberta formed the second largest group, which exceeded the national average by about 3 percentage points. Refugees, however, account for only about 5% of Alberta's immigrants, about half their share at the national level.

Table 1: Permanent Residents by Category (in percentage)

	Family Class		Immigrants		Refugees		Other Immigrants	
1999	30.4	29.1	64.0	57.5	5.2	12.8	0.3	0.5
2000	29.3	26.6	63.6	59.9	6.9	13.2	0.2	0.2
2001	30.7	26.6	63.5	62.1	5.7	11.1	0.1	0.1
2002	33.5	27.2	58.7	60.2	6.2	11.0	1.6	1.7
2003	32.8	29.4	58.0	54.7	5.2	11.7	3.9	4.2
2004	29.4	26.4	61.9	56.7	6.4	13.9	2.3	3.0
2005	26.2	24.2	67.5	59.6	4.8	13.6	1.5	2.6
2006	32.0	28.0	61.2	54.9	4.5	12.9	2.4	4.1
2007	32.4	28.0	60.0	55.4	4.8	11.8	2.7	4.8
2008	28.3	26.5	65.3	60.3	3.5	8.8	3.0	4.3

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada

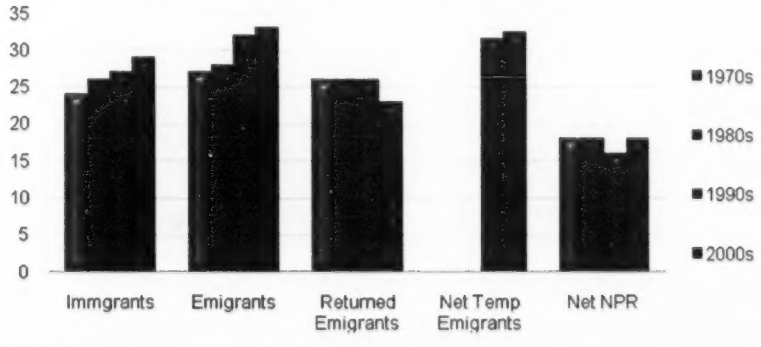
Age patterns for each category of international migrant have been changing over time (see Figure 4). Overall, the modal age (age group most frequently observed) for each migration category has been increasing. For example, the most frequently observed age for immigrants was about 24 years of age in the 1970s, but has now risen to approximately 29 years of age. A similar change in age patterns has also been observed for emigration.

ORIGIN AND DESTINATION

WHAT COUNTRIES DO IMMIGRANTS COME FROM?

Immigrants to Alberta have come from various parts of the world, including Asia (e.g., Middle East, China, Philippines, and India), the Americas (e.g., USA, South America), and Europe (e.g., United Kingdom, Romania). As indicated in Figure 5, the pattern of immigrant birth place has changed over time. Before 1991, Europe was the major source of immigrants for Alberta. However, Asian immigrants have been coming more and more to Alberta, becoming the predominant origin of immigrants in recent years (2001-2006). Asian immigrants increased from 31% of total immigrants before 1991 to 59% in 2001-2006 while the number of European immigrants decreased from 49% to 15% over the

Figure 4: Modal Age of International Migrants



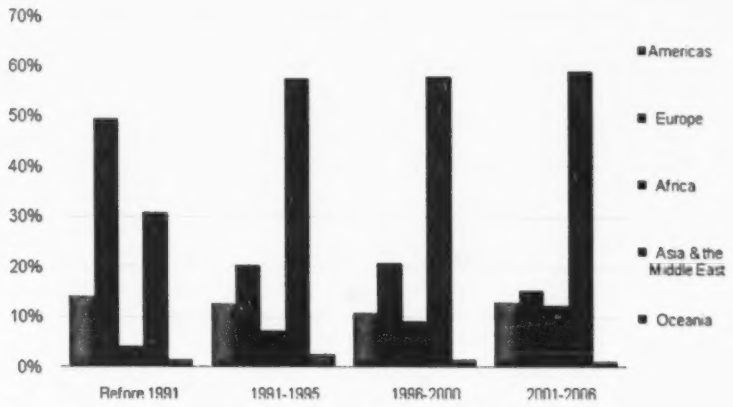
same time periods. The majority of Asian immigrants (63%) came from Eastern (24% of total immigrants from China) and Southern Asia (18% from the Philippines).

WHERE ARE IMMIGRANTS GOING?

Calgary and Edmonton Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) have attracted more than 80% of total immigrants across all time periods (see Table 2). For example, more than 89,000 landed immigrants between 2001 and 2006 settled down in major urban centers like Calgary (56%) and Edmonton (31%), which accounted for 87% of total immigrants in Alberta.

Calgary has experienced an increasing share of Alberta's total immigrants from 43.1% (before 1991) to 55.9% (2001-2006). The share of immigrants settling in Edmonton, however, has been steadily decreasing since 1995. Overall, 48% of immigrants settle down in Calgary and 36% chose to live in Edmonton.

Figure 5: Birth PLaces of Immigrants in Alberta (Percentage Distribution)



Following Calgary and Edmonton CMAs, urban regions such as Wood Buffalo, Red Deer, and Lethbridge have recently been other destinations for immigrants, drawing more than 1000 each (i.e., 2001-2006).

Table 2: Immigrant Population by Period of Immigration, 2006 Counts

CMA	Before 1991		1991-1995		1996-2000		2001-2006		Total	
Brooks	1,115	0.4	300	0.5	475	0.7	1,010	1.0	2,905	0.6
Calgary - CMA	127,455	43.1	30,915	49.7	36,450	55.5	57,940	55.9	252,770	48.0
Camrose	790	0.3	55	0.1	55	0.1	120	0.1	1,025	0.2
Canmore	1,065	0.4	185	0.3	365	0.6	260	0.3	1,885	0.4
Cold Lake	370	0.1	85	0.1	60	0.1	75	0.1	585	0.1
Edmonton - CMA	113,825	38.5	23,870	38.4	20,165	30.7	31,910	30.8	189,775	36.0
Grande Prairie	2,465	0.8	420	0.7	545	0.8	615	0.6	4,050	0.8
Lethbridge	8,045	2.7	880	1.4	950	1.4	1,120	1.1	10,990	2.1
Lloydminster	580	0.2	80	0.1	45	0.1	85	0.1	790	0.1
Medicine Hat	3,530	1.2	450	0.7	445	0.7	740	0.7	5,160	1.0
Okotoks	810	0.3	95	0.2	165	0.3	415	0.4	1,485	0.3
Red Deer	4,045	1.4	820	1.3	1,005	1.5	1,785	1.7	7,655	1.5
Wetaskiwin	535	0.2	65	0.1	115	0.2	140	0.1	860	0.2
Wood Buffalo	2,340	0.8	660	1.1	845	1.3	1,940	1.9	5,785	1.1
Other	28,420	9.6	3,360	5.4	4,035	6.1	5,525	5.3	41,310	7.8
Alberta	295,390	100.0	62,240	100.0	65,720	100.0	103,680	100.0	527,030	100.0